CHURCH NEWS

FROM THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

Edited by
THE NORTHERN ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE
Sigtuna, Sweden

Director: Dr. HARRY JOHANSSON, Sigtuna, Sweden
Editor: Rev. JOHS. LANGHOFF, Øster Egesborg per Mern, Denmark

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No. 67 March 22nd, 1961.

Greatly Increased Aid to Developing Countries.

At the Northern Council Meeting in Copenhagen at the end of February it was agreed that the aid to developing countries should be considerably increased and that Northern co-operation in this field would be of value. A committee of Northern Government Ministers to draw up more detailed plans for this joint assistance was set up. The Northern Council is a joint organ for the Northern Parliaments and Governments.

At present the Northern countries contribute a total of about 15 million Dollars towards the developing countries. The size of the proposed increase is not yet known, but it is expected to be substantial. Some quarters have suggested that 1% of the national income should be given towards aid to the developing countries, a sum which would be 15 times the present aid; but an increase of such dimensions is out of the question, at any rate.

In the course of debate in the Northern Council the Norwegian Member of Parliament, Mr. Erling Wikborg, said that the Northern missionary societies employ altogether 2,700 missionaries as church ministers, teachers, physicians, etc. in the developing countries and that the voluntary contributions towards the work of Northern missionaries amount to some 7 million Dollars.

Northern Competition for Religious Novel.

Three publishing houses for religious literature in Denmark, Norway and Sweden - "De Unges Forlag", "Lundes Forlag" and "Gummesson's Förlag" - have arranged a joint competition for the best novel which, "based on a Christian outlook on life, combines a high standard of art and contents with a vivid description of environment and period".

The time limit has been fixed for January 1962.

DENMARK

Satisfaction with Social Democratic Yes to Lutheran National Church.

The new Social Democratic outline for a Party constitution in which the former demand for a separation of State and Church has been struck out, thereby indirectly approving of a National Church (see CN No. 66), has been received with satisfaction in wide circles.

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Satisfaction with Social Democratic Line in Lutheran Pastoral Circles.

The new Social Democratic outline for a Party constitution in which the former demand for a declaration of State and Church has been struck out, thereby tacitly approving of a National Church (see CN No. 66), has been received with satisfaction in wide circles.

In an editorial the "Kristeligt Dagblad" draws attention to the fact that this is an instance of an almost typically true Danish development. "We in the Northern countries prefer a more quiet pace of developments to an explosion of events, evolution to revolution. We try to learn from the passing of time and the ensuing changes. The fact that almost all Danish workers, in spite of an at times rather violent agitation and in spite of the practically unanimous example set by the avowed leaders through a couple of generations, have remained members of the Church must, of course, in due time find an expression."

The paper is quite aware that there are still some in the Party ranks who would like to see the old fight against the Church carried on. The Social Democratic Party has not become a Church party, but its official opposition has been called off. The underlying reasons may be rather varied, ranging from a fear of the influence of reactionary forces in the Church in case it were separated from the State to a sincere love of the same Church. The "Kristeligt Dagblad" concludes the editorial by expressing satisfaction with the change of attitude.

The non-Socialist Parties have criticized that in the draft for a new constitution the Social Democratic Party has nothing positive to say about the position of the Church in society. In a commentary to the constitution the Prime Minister, Mr. Viggo Kampmann, says that such positively worded statements have been left out in deference to Party members who are not members of the Lutheran National Church.

Minister of Church Affairs to Address Demonstration on Easter Day Against Nuclear Armaments.

Mrs. Bodil Koch, Social Democratic Minister of Church Affairs in Denmark, has promised to address the members of a demonstration march from Holbaek to Copenhagen on Easter Sunday, arranged by the "Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons". Her promise has caused quite a stir in as much as Denmark is a member of the NATO, thereby in principle approving of nuclear armaments although not wanting them to be stationed in Denmark. A Conservative paper even goes as far as demanding her resignation, while the Social Democratic organ "Aktuelt" does not consider it incompatible with the responsibility of a Minister to deliver an address at this occasion. In replying to an inquiry by the "Kristeligt Dagblad" as to the reason for her assent to speak at the demonstration, Mrs. Koch answered curtly: "Because I believe it is right."

Amendments to the Act about the Use of Churches.

The Minister of Church Affairs. Mrs. Bodil Koch, has proposed certain amendments to the Act about the Use of Churches belonging to the Lutheran National Church. According to the amendments, among other things, Finnish clergymen will be placed on a par with those of Norway and Sweden with regard to conducting divine services in Danish churches; the right of clergymen to conduct special services at which the present rituals need not be followed will be extended; and parish members will be allowed to obtain release from being served by the minister properly in charge of their parish so that they can be served by any other permanently appointed minister in another parish if they so wish. So far it has been possible to apply for the services of only the Rector of another parish. Now this arrangement will be possible also with regard to curates and ordinary assistant clergymen.

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The amendments have been favourably received by all the political parties and may therefore be expected to come into effect soon. At the reading in the "Folketinget" (Parliament) the Minister said that in the Bill she had included a rule that laymen should be entitled to deliver addresses at divine services. As a matter of fact, laymen have often done so, but without proper legal authority for it.

First Authorized Version of the Bible in the Faeroese Language.

The Danish Bible Society has now completed a translation of the Bible directly from Hebraic and Greek into the Faeroese language which, on the recommendation of the Minister of Church Affairs, has been authorized by the King. Large sections of the present version of the Bible in the Faeroese language have been translated from either Danish or English so that this is the first complete translation of the Bible into Faeroese to become authorized.

FINLAND

American Church Dignitary on Visit.

This summer the President of the Suomi Synod in the USA, Mr. Raymond Warglin, will visit Finland at an invitation from Archbishop Ilmari Salomies. Last year the Archbishop took part in the 70-years' anniversary of the Suomi Synod. The Synod was founded by Finnish emigrants to America. Last year the Synod resolved to cease as an independent Synod in order to join a united Lutheran Church.

Young Girl Speaks with Tongues.

A young typist in Oulu (Uleåborg) has caused quite a stir in church circles by displaying the gift of speaking with tongues. While praying in her home she speaks with tongues, afterwards translating the message into Finnish. Her sister, a school teacher, has taken down the messages and her father, a retired civil servant, has had them printed and duplicated in some 100,000 copies and distributed to almost all congregations in Finland. The pamphlet is entitled "Finland, Thy Salvation is the Blood of My Son".

The language in which the young girl speaks is quite unknown, although it is said to contain a few words from Eastern languages, and perhaps from Chinese. She speaks slowly and quietly, now and then interrupting herself in order to repeat the message in Finnish. There is no question of her being in a state of ecstasy. The young girl does not want her name to be made public as she is only "at God's disposal". She is a member of the Cathedral parish in Oulu (Uleåborg). Some clergymen who have heard her speak with tongues have a most favourable impression of her.

She spoke with tongues for the first time on August 23rd, 1960. The main theme of the messages is more or less the same every time. If, at the end of this year, there are not at least 800,000 confessed believers in Finland, the nation will perish. The Finns will be driven out and foreigners take possession of their country instead.

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Graham's Visit Postponed.

The American evangelist, Billy Graham, who was expected in Helsinki (Helsingfors) this summer in order to deliver a series of addresses, has informed Bishop Simojoki that he will not be able to come before the summer of 1962.

New Integration of Organizations.

The Agricola Society, the purpose of which is to further the distribution of religious literature and arrange study groups, will now be integrated with the Home Missionary Society of the Lutheran National Church of Finland. At the same time a new Bible School for the whole country will be started under the leadership of Professor Esko Haapa.

Before then, an integration of the Home Missionary Society and the "People's Bible Society" had taken place.

New Rules for Meditation in Connection with Divorces?

A deputation consisting of Bishop Martti Simojoki, Helsinki (Helsingfors), Dr. Kaisa Turpeinen and President of District Court Helvi Sipilä have approached the Minister of Justice, Mr. Antti Hannikainen, with a proposal for certain amendments to the rules for mediation which, according to the law, must take place prior to a divorce. Under the present form there are too few positive results, it is felt, and it is suggested that the period for mediation be extended to one month, and that family consultation centres, social welfare committees and similar institutions be allowed to take part in the efforts of conciliation instead of the matter being left entirely to the rector of a parish.

Growing Activity of Ecumenical Committee.

The Ecumenical Committee in Finland, its 40 members representing 25 different Churches and Church organizations, displays an ever increasing activity. Thus 11 different sub-committees charged with more special kinds of work have been set up. Chairman of the Committee is Bishop Elis Gulin, Tampere (Tammerfors) and Secretary General is Dr. Seppo A. Teinonen. Last year the work of the Helsinki (Helsingfors) University Ecumenical Institute has been very comprehensive. The Ecumenical Committee has now been recognized by the World Council of Churches as the Ecumenical Council of the Churches in Finland.

Honour Conferred upon Pioneer in Christian Youth Work.

One of the pioneers in Finland in religious work among children and youth, the author Sulo Parpio, has been awarded a prize of honour of 1,5 million Finnish Marks by the Finnish Cultural Fund. The prize is considered a recognition not only of his literary production, but also of his pioneer work among children and young people.

97,8% Belong to the Lutheran National Church.

Recent statistics show that 97,8% of the Finnish population, i.e. 4,337,560 of the 4,436,400 inhabitants of the country, belong to the Lutheran National Church. The Orthodox Church has 72,857 members. Of the other recognized communities the biggest is the Finnish Free Church with 7,689 members.

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ICELAND

Danish Organ for the Cathedral of Skálholt.

A number of friends of Iceland in Denmark have presented an organ to the new Icelandic Cathedral of Skálholt. The organ has been designed by Professor Mogens Koch and built by the organ building firm of Th. Frobenius. At the moment the organ is on display in Denmark, but will shortly be dispatched to Skálholt. The new cathedral will probably not be ready for dedication before the summer of 1962.

NORWAY

First Woman Minister in Norway.

On Sunday, March 19th, the Bishop of Hamar Dr. Kristian Schjelderup ordained the first woman in the Norwegian Lutheran National Church Mrs. Ingrid Bjerkås who graduated in Divinity last year was permitted by the Government to take orders two weeks ago, and she will provisionally hold vacant offices in the Diocese of Hamar,

Already before the last war the Norwegian Parliament rescinded the general prohibition against women being ministers in the Church, but then the restriction was made in the law that women could only be appointed to livings where the local church council wanted them. This restriction was cut out from the law in 1956 by an Act of Parliament. In large sections of the Norwegian Lutheran National Church there is a strong opposition against women ministers, and that is the reason why up to now none of the more than 40 women theologians has applied for a living or for ordination.

Mrs. Bjerkås, however, has applied for several vacancies in the last year. As soon as it became known that the Government had given permission for the ordination of Mrs. Bjerkås and that Bishop Schjelderup would ordain her six of the nine bishops in Norway made a joint declaration in which they expressed their strong regret. They "find it impossible to combine the services of women ministers with the fundamental attitude of New Testament and its explicit statements". Therefore it is "impossible for them to ordain women or in any other way extend any positive assistance to them in their services as ministers". The six bishops declare moreover that they must maintain their right to act according to their conscience "even when this leads to conflict with external State and State Church regulations." The six bishops conclude their statement by saying: "The system of women ministers will give rise to much distress and bitter controversies in our Church. To force through a new Church order which will cause such qualms of conscience and such practical difficulties in the congregations is indeed a most serious matter, and anyone taking part in it must consider the grave responsibility included."

Of the three other bishops in the Norwegian Lutheran National Church Bishop Alf Wiig of Tromsö previously has declared that he like Bishop Schjelderup does not find it apprehensive to ordain women. Bishop Tord Godal of Nidaros (Trondheim), who has just been appointed the successor of Bishop Fjellbu, in a separate declaration has expressed his opinion that "Holy Scriptures, correctly interprete

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cannot be said in principle to maintain a 'no'". He says, however, that "an ordination, with the consequences which it involves, in practice will cause many difficulties. It will act as an interference in the order of the Church and the break of a nearly thousand years of tradition in our country." Even if there as a matter of principle is no objection to be made the practical considerations may carry such a weight that the matter must be declined. The question must be what is best serving the promotion of the Gospel. "Therefore the local circumstances and the general attitude must play a decisive rôle", Bishop Godal says.

Postponement of Decision by Missionary Council.

At its meeting last month the Norwegian Missionary Council did not come to a final decision with regard to its attitude to the question of consultative status in relation to the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism under the World Council of Churches which is planned to be established at the integration of the latter with the International Missionary Council. The issue will not be finally settl until at a meeting in May, prior to which it is to be debated by the missionary societies and Churches affiliated to the Council.

At the annual conference of the Missionary Council Mr. Tormod Vågen, Secretary General, was re-elected Chairman. Mr. Vågen is a declared opponent to any kind of affiliation with the World Council of Churches, including that of consultative status in relation to its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism.

Bishop Newbigin Visits Norway.

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, Secretary General of the International Missionary Council, paid a visit to Norway last month at the invitatio of the Norwegian Missionary Society and the Egede Institute. To a question in an interview in the Christian daily paper in Oslo "Vårt Land", as to whether he was aiming at a super-Church - as alleged by many in Norway - the Bishop answered:

"No, certainly not! I do not even know the meaning of the word as it makes no sense. If a 'super-Church' implies the idea of a centralized and bureaucratic construction, I am definitely opposed to her. On the other hand, I should like to point out that words intended to scare people with should not be employed for the sake of getting aroun New Testament's own teaching about the unity of the Christians. Such unity is not exclusively of a spiritual and invisible kind."

Bishop Newbigin stressed the forthcoming integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches as a natural development, both from a practical point of view and in principle; but to this he added, obviously having in mind the situatio in Norway where the Norwegian Missionary Council stands divided on the question of relation to the new Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. "It is more important to preserve the unity of mission friends in a certain area than to achieve a big and strong international missionary council."

Norwegian Delegation to New Delhi.

The delegation to represent the Norwegian Lutheran National Churc at the Assembly of the World Council of Churches at New Delhi has now been appointed by the Norwegian Government. It will consist of Bishop

Kåre Stöylen, Rev. Christian Tidemann Strand, Rev. Arne Edvin Strønstad, Mr. Gunnar Spilling, Managing Director, and Miss Anne-Berit Aas, Graduate in Divinity. Substitutes will be, in the same order: Bishop Fridtjov Birkeli, Rev. Johan B. Rian, Rev. Håkon Halvarsrud, Rector Erling Smemo and Mrs. Ester Tveter.

Integration of the Dissenters' Council and the Joint Council of Evangelical Communities?

The general assembly of the Joint Council of Evangelical Communities last month unanimously adopted a resolution requesting the Dissenters' Council in Norway to take the initiative in proposing an integration of the two organizations. The Assembly suggested that, in the first place, the Boards of the two organizations should set up a joint committee to draw up a report on the matter.

The main object of the Dissenters' Council, established in 1903, has been to represent the Free Churches when dealing with the State and other authorities while the Evangelical Joint Council, founded during the last war, has helped to establish practical co-operation among the communities.

Norwegian Bible Society Becomes Ecumenical Enterprise.

The Diocesan Committees of the Norwegian Bible Society have approved a resolution passed by the National Board to the effect that members of the Free Churches may sit on the Diocesan Committees as well as on the National Board together with members of the Lutheran National Church, the Bible Society thus becoming an ecumenical undertaking. So far Free Church members have occasionally sat on the Diocesan Committees, but this has been more or less accidental.

Norwegian Missionaries in the Congo Evacuated.

Over the Norwegian and Swedish Broadcasting Corporations the Pentecostal Movement has requested its missionaries in the Kivu Province in the Congo to leave the district at once after the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs had declared that the Government could not accept the responsibility of allowing Norwegian citizens to remain in the very unsettled area. 25 adults and 10 children were evacuated. They will remain in the neighbouring state Ruanda-Urundi until further notice.

Course in Oslo for Parish Workers.

The Norwegian Congregational Institute has decided to start an 8-months' course for parish workers at Fredriksborg, Bygdø.

At the annual meeting of the Congregational Institute last month it was learned, moreover, that last year 15 conferences of contact had been arranged by the Institute for workers and 3 for industrial leaders. This kind of work is to be further extended.

This summer the Institute, in co-operation with the Diocesan Council of Nidaros (Trondheim), will arrange for "Congregational Days at Trondheim 1961". It is hoped that these "Days" may eventually develop into something like the German "Kirchentag". Three topics of fundamental and current Christian interest will be dealt with in Bible classes, study groups and lectures.

Once More an Easter Week Festival in Oslo.

Also in this year the Easter Week will be celebrated in Oslo as a special Church festival with sacred concerts, church plays, cultural events, visits to museums of church interest, and a number of devotional and special services in various churches.

SWEDEN

1.500 Clergymen Want Release from Obligation to Perform Marriages.

1.500 clergymen in the Swedish Lutheran National Church have signed a petition to the Swedish King appealing for a repeal of the law obliging clergymen belonging to the Lutheran National Church to marry any member of his parish asking for it. As Government officials they are obliged to marry any member, including divorced persons. The petition was handed over to the King by a deputation of clergymen. Altogether there are almost 2,700 clergymen in the National Church.

The reason for this step is a sentence passed on a minister who had refused to marry a couple because one of them had been divorced. The petition expresses deep concern about the interpretation of the law as indicated by the sentence. "As Christians we are bound by the word of God which is above human authority", the petition states.

None of the Bishops has signed the petition, having resolved at the last Bishops' Conference to work for the repeal of the marriage obligation in other ways.

Swedish Bishop in Tanganyika.

The Lutheran Haya Church in Tanganyika has elected Professor Bengt Sundkler to be the first bishop of the Church. Bishop Sundkler, who was born in 1909, is professor of history of missions at the University of Uppsala, Sweden, and leader of the Swedish Institute of Missionary Research. From 1937 to 1942 he worked as a missionary in South Africa, 1942-1945 he was superintendent in the Haya Church and 1944-1945 also principal of the Kigaro Seminary. As a staff member of the International Missionary Council and as professor Bishop Sundkler has made several journeys to Africa and also visited India.

Evacuation of Pentecostal Missionaries in the Congo.

Sustained efforts have at long last resulted in the evacuation of the 20 Swedish missionaries employed by the Pentecostal Movement in the Kivu Province in the Congo. In spite of the increasing unrest in the Province the missionaries stayed on at the mission station at Bukavu, but have now been fetched by the passenger plane flying conducted parties from the Swedish travelling bureau "Church Travelling Agency" to Albert Schweitzer's jungle hospital at Lambarene.

1 % for Developing Countries.

The Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Alliance of Swedish Christian Social Democrats have each of them issued an appeal to their members for a voluntary regular contribution of 1% of their net income towards aid to the developing countries. Among other possible uses for the contribution are mentioned: 1) the activities of the Central Committee for Swedish Technical Assistance in various countries

and its scholarship funds, 2) the social work of foreign missions and 3) the relief programme of the World Council of Churches.

Besides raising money for these purposes the appeals are an attempt at proving that there are people willing to give 1 % of their income to the developing countries. It is hoped in this way to arouse public opinion in favour of a proposal from several quarters, among them various Christian organizations, that Parliament should allow a grant of 1% of the national income towards aid to the developing countries.

In a leader the weekly paper of the Swedish Mission Covenant Church "Svensk Veckotidning" advocates that the Swedish State votes the same amount of money for developing countries as for the present national defence programme.

A proposal by the Swedish national organization of trade unions for increasing the aid to developing countries from 30 to 300 million Swedish Crowns has been rejected by Government on the ground that such a drastic increase would be unwise, partly because of the scarcity of definite plans and suitable personnel for the relief work, partly because the population, in Government opinion, is not yet ready for it.

The Nobel Peace Prize for Luthuli?

In a communication to the Norwegian Nobel Committee under the "Storting" (Parliament) a group of Swedish Members of Parliament have proposed that the Peace Prize for 1961 be awarded to the Christian South African leader, Albert Luthuli, who at the moment is serving a sentence of 5 years' expatriation because of his opposition to the apartheid policy of the Government.

Increased Influence to the Laity.

A rector shall no longer automatically be the chairman of the church council of his parish. That is one of the new features in the Bill on Local Church Administration which Dr. Edenman, Government Minister for Church and Education, will submit to Parliament before long. The local church council shall elect a chairman and a vice chairman among its members. On the other hand the rector is automatically a member of the local church council, and therefore he is also eligible for the chairmanship.

In the moot question who shall decide concerning the use of the church building for other purposes than church services the Minister proposes that the right to decide alone in this matter shall be taken from the rector and be given to the local church council. This item, however, will be taken out from the Bill and be brought before the Church Assembly in 1963. In a matter which must also be decided upon by the Church Assembly the Act of Parliament must come in the same year as the Church Assembly is held.

Easier Admission to the Lutheran National Church?

In the weekly "Vår Kyrka" the Rev. Dr. Tore Heldtander, has suggested that admission to the Swedish Lutheran National Church should be made less complicated than at present. A person who has not been baptized in the Lutheran National Church, but applies for membership, may be admitted, provided "he has received such instruction in

and its scholarship funds, 2) the social work of foreign missions and 3) the relief programme of the World Council of Churches.

Besides raising money for these purposes the appeals are an attempt at proving that there are people willing to give 1 % of their income to the developing countries. It is hoped in this way to arouse public opinion in favour of a proposal from several quarters, among them various Christian organisations, that Parliament should allow a grant of 1% of the national income towards aid to the developing countries.

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The Nobel Peace Prize for Dag Hammarskjöld

In a communication to the Norwegian Nobel Committee under the "Storting" (Parliament) a group of Swedish Members of Parliament have proposed that the Peace Prize for 1961 be awarded to the Christian South African leader, Albert Lutuli, who at the moment is serving a sentence of 5 years' expatriation because of his opposition to the apartheid policy of the Government.

Increased Influence to the Laity:

A rector shall no longer automatically be the chairman of the church council of his parish. That is one of the new features in the Bill on Local Church Administration which Dr. Brunne, Government Minister for Church and Education, will submit to Parliament before long. The local church council shall elect a chairman and a vice chairman among its members. On the other hand the rector is automatically a member of the local church council, and therefore he is also eligible for the chairmanship.

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Rector Admission to the Lutheran National Church

In the weekly "Var Kyrka" the Rev. Dr. Tore Hallqvist, has suggested that admission to the Swedish Lutheran National Church should be made less complicated than at present. A person who has not been baptized in the Lutheran National Church, but registers for membership, may be admitted, provided the has received Church instruction in

:he doctrine of the Church as may be expected of him, his age and other ircumstances considered, and provided he has declared by word of mouth in the presence of a clergyman that his application is based on earnest religious convictions." The author feels that, since a written resignation from the Church without any interviews with a clergyman will soon be legally valid, the admission into the Church ought likewise to be simplified - no less when considering the fact that children of parents belonging to the Lutheran National Church automatically become members of the Church at birth, regardless of whether they are baptized or not later on.

Free Church Ecumenicity.

The question of a closer rapprochement between different Swedish Free Churches has been made actual again by an article written by Dr. Sven Hemrin and published in the magazine "Tro ooh liv" (Faith and Life). Dr. Hemrin points out that a not insignificant group, mainly composed of people with a university education, is expecting a quick and radical decisive step. The majority of the members of the congregations also takes a positive attitude towards changes in the direction of unity, but among them is not very much inclination to take initiatives but much of conservatism. This majority, however, is willing to listen to the opinions and arguments of the leaders, and it expects signals from the leading circles.